

Clyde Hudson USAR #20  
December 5, 1984

Q: Mr. Hudson, when did you first join the Navy?

A: I joined the Navy in June, 1939.

Q: And, what was the first ship you were assigned to?

A: The USS *San Francisco*, a Navy cruiser.

Q: And, where did you join up on the ship?

A: I went through the Navy boot camp in Norfolk, VA, and on Sept. 12 when the War got bad in Europe, they cleaned out the Naval Training Center of people who had ample training and put them aboard ships.

Q: That was Sept. 1940?

A: 1939.

Q: When did you go to Pearl Harbor with the *San Francisco*?

A: In March of 1940 when the fleet maneuvers were held at Lahaina Roads . The San Francisco was dispatched to the Hawaiian detachment.

Q: What was your regular duty on the ship?

A: At the time I was a mess cook. Mess cooking paid extra money, \$5.00 a month from the Navy. And each man that ate at your table (which I had 20 people eating at those tables) would put a dollar in a bowl each payday. So that was instantly \$45.00 a month raise for me.

Q: That was quite a bit back in those days.

A: I could afford anything.

Q: What did you do the night before the attack, that is Dec. 6th?

A: Well the night before the attack I had gotten out of the "deck force" and had gotten into the Commissary Department. That was the cooks and bakers. My reason for getting into the group of cooks and bakers was for the main reason that each night that we were in port, the cooks could go ashore and every other weekend you had liberty guaranteed if you weren't at sea. That is my sole reason for becoming a Navy cook.

Q: So how did you spend the evening then?

A: Well before the evening of Dec. 6th, I had the duty. Four cooks would be on duty and we would relieve the watch on Friday around noon and we were on duty for the remaining preparation of the meals until the lunch Monday. We had secured the galley in San Francisco in a relaxing situation.

Q: On the morning of the 7th, what was the first indication that you had and where were you at the time, when you realized that something out of the ordinary was happening?

A: Well on the morning of Dec. 7th, again, it was my assignment to be on duty in the galley, and we had prepared hotcakes and bacon for the crew that was aboard (those that didn't rate liberty.) The galley on the *San Francisco* was topside. We could see everything. And the first planes I really had a look at, in that we were tied up in the Navy yard were those bombing the Ford Island Naval Air Station.

Q: What did that look like to you?

A: At first it was a total unbelief. I could not fathom the fact that any country would have attacked Pearl Harbor, especially with the location where we were, and to my knowledge, no one was mad the at United States.

Q: What did you do then after that first moment of shock and recognition?

A: Well, as soon as the people there on the ship and the officer of the day realized we were under attack, he sounded battle stations. My battle station was in a 3-inch gun turret at the rear of the ship. We had no ammunition aboard. We were getting power and water from the Navy Yard, and we were in the Navy yard for an over haul period. We had no ammunition aboard.

Q: So what did you do there?

A: I went to the turret as natural instinct would demand me to do, knowing full well that we were not going to shoot at anybody.

Q: What did you do once you were there?

A: We were there for maybe 20 or 30 minutes and someone from the crew (the turret captain I would imagine) said we might as well leave here. We were only protected here from the most horrible whatever it may be. So we went back to the galley and made coffee and that kind of stuff for whoever might want it.

Q: Did you spend the rest of the attack there in the galley?

A: Yes. Of course I had the "watch" as we called it until noon Monday. Of course, we had a (as I would have said in those days) a fabulous menu planned for Sunday. That menu was scrapped and not until very, very late in the afternoon and early evening of Dec. the 7th did we prepare anything, and only sandwiches and

canned fruits then.

Q: Do you remember what was on your fabulous menu that you had planned?

A: Well, In these years that have passed I wouldn't absolutely quote it but I would imagine fried chicken and whatever. Sunday was always a fabulous meal in the making.

Q: How long did you stay there in the galley working?

A: Well, the remainder of the night I stayed on duty, making coffee and sandwiches for whatever Navy yard workers that would come aboard or whoever. I had one experience that remains in my mind and really sticks out in that we were along side a dock, and on the other side of this dock was a heavy cruiser, the USS *New Orleans*, a sister ship of the *San Francisco*. Rumor got out that ater from the Navy Yard from where we had been getting our water had been poisoned. You know all the rumors that got started. Immediately, someone said well now the *New Orleans* has still got plenty of water that they have in their tanks that is potable. We took two tremendous containers, went across the dock through all this tangle of lines, up gangways, and filled up these two pots of water; three of us, coming back aboard the *San Francisco*, spilling most of it as we travelled along. We got back aboard the *San Francisco* and got the word that the *New Orleans* had the same water we did. So it was total useless on that.

Q: Were people pretty apprehensive then, about things in general, not just the water?

A: Absolutely. Rumors were running rampant about what could have taken place if the Japanese had landed and all that kind of stuff. Of course, we were all scared within an inch of our lives. If you weren't you were pretty stupid.

Q: What did you do on Monday?

A: Well, Monday morning we were able to start and have a breakfast, which I don't remember what the menu consisted of that Monday morning; but we did fix a breakfast for the crew and a lunch. Then when we got through with the lunch and cleaned the galley up, I was off for 24 hours. That doesn't mean I had the right to go in to Honolulu. I did not. No liberty.

Q: What did you do with your time?

A: Well, the Frisco was making plans (of course every ship there that could move was making preparations) to get back to sea. I helped as best I could, in any way, to get ammunition and guns and that kind of stuff returned to sea duty order.

Q: Activity was pretty hectic then?

A: Activity was absolutely unbelievable.

Q: When did the *San Francisco* finally leave Pearl Harbor?

A: We stayed in Pearl Harbor maybe, it took us (I can't quote the definite time) but only a matter of just about a week, and everything was restored. Of course, our over haul period went down the drain. We were supposed to have been in dock... dry dock, where the *Pennsylvania* was. The *Pennsylvania* had a few more things to be done and we were supposed to have gone into dry dock on Friday. We were very likely to have been where the *Cassin* and the *Downes* were blown to bits. Luck.

Q: Yeah, that plays a big factor.

A: There were a lot of "ifs".

Q: Were you on the *San Francisco* in some of those later actions, around Guadalcanal?

A: I didn't get to Guadalcanal as such. I got off and had to have an appendix operation and was sent ashore to a Navy mobile hospital to have my appendix out, and the *San Francisco* left there and left me. And I went back to the States for new construction.

Q: What stands out in your mind, in terms of your memory, about more than any other single thing, about the Attack on Dec. 7th?

A: The total surprise and the total mind-boggling situation that we were attacked. I could not believe that it would happen there in that remote area.

Q: Anything else you want to add?

A: No.

Q: Well, thank you very much. It's really kind of you to take the time off to talk to me.

A: My pleasure.